

Certified Peer Specialist Training Class FAQs

FAQs about Becoming a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS)

Quick Overview

The Certified Peer Specialist Training Program is a rigorous training for people preparing for the role of CPS in the mental health system, consumer-run organizations, and other partnering agencies.

The CPS role requires a person who is walking a path of recovery and has a basic understanding of, or has experienced the benefits of, peer support. The training is designed to enhance the recovery experience and serve as a foundation for the skills and beliefs necessary to become an effective peer specialist. The position requires a person to share their lived experience in a healthy, constructive manner. The class consists of two sessions, Peer Support Level One Training and Peer Support Level Two Training; each leveled training session is followed by a written exam. In addition, the class requires people to demonstrate abilities that are necessary in the CPS role, including self-advocacy and creative problem solving. Participants are expected to initiate connection and mutuality with classmates and instructors and to utilize their own resources and supports during the course of the training.

What is a Certified Peer Specialist?

A Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) is a person who has been trained to effectively share his or her experiences with recovery to carry the message that recovery is real and possible for all people. In sharing their experience, strength, and hope with others, including people utilizing mental health services, mental health providers, and policy makers, Peer Specialists can significantly impact people's belief about their own capacity to recover and the capacity of all people to recover and transform their lives.

Who is qualified to be a Certified Peer Specialist?

Qualified candidates must meet all of the following criteria:

- Self-identification as a person with lived experience of psychiatric diagnosis and recovery. "Lived experience" refers to the direct personal experience of behavioral health challenges, either currently or in the past.
- A minimum age of at least 18 years and a high school diploma or equivalent.
- Certification in the State of Kansas to provide the service, which includes successful completion of the Certified Peer Specialist training and two written examinations that measure specific skill sets.

What is the main purpose of the course?

The main purpose of the Level One and Level Two Peer Support trainings is to train those with lived experience in how to use their stories effectively to assist people receiving services as well as service providers. This is a rigorous course that grants a state-recognized professional certification.

In class, trainees learn how to provide one-to-one and group peer support; in addition, participants learn how to serve as change agents to further the recovery movement. As living proof that recovery is real, Peer Specialists are ideally suited to bring forth the message of a recovery-based system of service and support and to offer a unique perspective of what it's like to be on the receiving end of those services.

How do I apply for the CPS Training Program?

An application is required for all potential participants of the training. This application can be printed from www.trainingteams.org or by contacting William Welch at the Center for Behavioral Health Initiatives at the Community Engagement Institute at 316.978.3224 or william.welch@wichita.edu. Applications may be submitted at any time and will be processed in order received.

When and where will CPS Trainings be provided?

Certified Peer Specialist trainings are provided in two separate multiple-day trainings. Level One training is currently a two-and-a-half day training consisting of classroom, group, and individual learning. All individuals who are accepted into the trainings are eligible to attend this training at no cost; however, the individual will be responsible for their travel and lodging. Level Two training is currently a three-day training focusing again on classroom, individual, and group learning, with increased focus on application of Peer Specialist principles and tools. Level Two trainings are reserved for those currently employed by a community mental health center or partnering organization; it is understood that either the individual or the employing agency will provide transportation to Level Two training, and lodging will be covered by either the employing agency or the Center for Community Support and Research.

Trainings at both levels will be provided at various locations across Kansas on scheduled dates. A calendar of trainings can be found at trainingteams.org.

Who provides Certified Peer Specialist trainings?

Trainings are provided by Wichita State University's Center for Community Support and Research and funded and monitored by the Kansas Department of Aging and Disability Services. Trainings are conducted by Certified Peer Specialists who have undergone facilitator training under the direction of the Center for Community Support and Research.